

<b>DECISION-MAKER</b> Cabinet Member for Housing	<b>DATE</b> 09 October 2020
<b>TITLE</b> Domestic Abuse Policy	<b>WARD (S)</b> All
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b> Jamie Carswell Director of Housing and Safer Communities	<b>CABINET MEMBER</b> Housing
<b>DECISION CLASSIFICATION</b> - Non Key	<b>FINAL DECISION</b> To be made on the recommendations in this report

I. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

- I.1 To agree the Domestic Abuse Policy and note the accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment.
- I.2 To authorise the Director of Housing and Safer Communities to make future amendments to this policy to take account of changes to in legislation and or policy.

**Agreed:**

**Date:** 09 October 2020

Signed.....

*(Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing)*

## 2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- A Safer Greenwich

2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high level objectives as follows:

- prioritise approaches to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms

## 3. **Introduction and Background**

3.1 For many victims of domestic abuse, the housing provider is their first point of contact for advice, support and information, around their housing options. It may be the first time they disclose their experience of domestic abuse. Therefore, it's important that front line officers within Housing & Safer Communities (HSC) who come into contact with victim, should have the appropriate training and skills, to provide advice, support and information in an empathetic manner.

3.2 Funding was obtained from the MHCLG for 2018/20 to improve the response to victims of Domestic Abuse who present to housing services. The Domestic Abuse Response Improvement Project provided a project officer, who was responsible for ensuring the implementation of improvements across the Housing Inclusion Service and Tenancy Services, plus a full time Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) who is able to provide direct fast time response to victims, while sharing skills and best practice with staff.

3.3 It is the intention that the project will also gain Royal Greenwich, the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation, which is seen as best practice in sustaining effective, appropriate and compassionate responses to DA victims. The assessment for the DAHA accreditation is due to take place in October 2020.

3.4 In line with the improvement plan, a HSC Domestic Abuse Policy has now been drafted to ensure that the services are guided by DA legislation and are both robust and accessible, to meet the diverse needs of all those approaching HSC, in need of DA services. It also recognises that risk management, safety planning and timely and effective communication, is pivotal in safeguarding victims and their children.

3.5 The proposed Policy sets out clear guidance on how officers will take steps to advise, assist and support any person experiencing domestic abuse, whether as a Council employee, resident, or non-resident in need of assistance and safety.

3.6 An Equalities and Impact Assessment (EIA) has also been conducted, to review how the implementation of the policy, would affect the diverse cohort. The Assessment outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy in response to service users with and without protected characteristics.

#### 4. **Available Options**

4.1 To agree sign-off the Domestic Abuse Policy and the Equality Impact Assessment.

#### 5. **Preferred Option**

5.1 To agree sign-off the Domestic Abuse Policy

#### 6. **Reasons for Recommendations**

6.1 It is essential that we have a clear Domestic Abuse policy for staff to follow and for the public to understand our commitment to tackling domestic abuse.

#### 8. **Consultation Results**

8.1 We have worked with our DA partners in the production of all documents.

## 9. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

The Steering Group make-up ensured that all cross-cutting implications were considered.

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Legal</b> including Human Rights Act	The Council can adopt such reasonable policy as it considers appropriate for the discharge of any of its functions. The Councils constitution provides that the Lead Member has delegated authority to agree new service policies and amendments to existing ones post consultation which would not result in a key decision. The Lead Member can therefore make the decision required.	Azuka Onuorah Head of Legal Services 12 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
<b>Finance</b> and other resources including procurement implications	The Lead Member of Housing and Safer Communities is requested to agree the Domestic Abuse Policy and the accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment. Funding for the Domestic Abuse (DA) policy was obtained from the MHCLG for 2018/20. The DA Response Improvement Project provided a Project Officer plus a full time Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDVA). The IDVA has been recruited to and funding has been secured for a further year from the MHCLG by the HER centre, one of the DA funded partners. This is a non- key decision and does not impact on any other budgets or resources.	Akosua Boachie  Accountancy Business Change Manager  11.08.2020
<b>Equalities</b>	An EIA was completed – see appendices.	Zainab Ibrahim-Noor Housing & Domestic Abuse Response Improvement Officer/

		Lydia Lewinson Performance, Policy and Development Manager
<b>Community safety</b>	<p>This proposal supports the Councils duties under Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998</p> <p>“17(1) Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is a priority area of concern for the Council and Community Safety partners. This proposal will enhance the support to victims, and identification and management of risk.</p>	Sean McDermid Assistant Director, Community Safety & Environmental Health

## 11. **Report Appendices**

11.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- *Appendix A: Domestic Abuse Policy*
- *Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)*
- *Appendix 1: DASH DA risk Identification Checklist*
- *Appendix 2: MARAC referral form*
- *Appendix 3: HSC Domestic Abuse Service Standards*

## 12. **Background Papers**

*See appendices*

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